

# INTRODUCTION





Traditionally, the Introduction to a commentary discusses in depth topics such as are listed in the outline that follows. In reality, users, checking a passage or theme, may go directly to it, without working through the Introduction. Accordingly, the findings of this Introduction, presupposed throughout the volume, are summarized here.

**Paul** writes to Christian house churches at Philippi **from Ephesus in 54–55**.<sup>\*</sup> The canonical four-ch. Phil contains **parts of three letters** from Paul:

- **Letter A.** 4:10–20 expresses thanks for the Philippians' concern for him and joy at their relationship; he describes some of his situation (no indication he is imprisoned). A.D. 54.
- **Letter B.** 1:1–3:1, likely parts of 4:1–9, 4:21–23, late 54 or early 55, while Paul is imprisoned in Ephesus. Joy and appreciation at their sharing in the gospel, including the ministry of a Philippian, Epaphroditus. Paul tells of his dire situation and the more positive prospects for the gospel's progress, urging unity in the face of opposition.
- **Letter C.** 3:2–21, perhaps parts of 4:1–9, A.D. 55; no evidence that Paul is still jailed. A polemical letter to warn against enemies, with concern over doctrine, ethics, and unity.

Letters B, C, and A were **combined A.D. 90–100**, probably in Philippi, to preserve Paul's words to his favorite congregation for Christians elsewhere.

There are many purposes to Phil because it combines letters for different situations. The commentary must treat each section in its original setting *and* further meanings in the redacted epistle. While I prefer thorough presentation of options on questions an Introduction should take up, limitation here on pages makes that impossible. Arguments are therefore condensed in each section, with some Bibliography.

## I. PHILIPPI AND ENVIRONS

The approach in this commentary will not be understood unless it is grasped that Philippi was almost unique among cities Paul addressed in his letters: it differed from other places he evangelized because of its "Roman-ness" and lack of a Jewish community. It was twice founded as a Roman *colonia* (Acts 16:12), first by Gaius Octavian (later Augustus Caesar) and Mark Antony after a double battle there in 42 B.C. when they defeated Cassius and Brutus and ended the Roman Republic; and then, after the defeat of Anthony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C., as *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis*. This "little Rome" had legal status as if in Italy, with some 10,000 inhabitants, many of them citizens, in a walled city of 167 acres plus over 700 square miles around it. Philippi reflected Thracian underpinnings, Hellenistic culture, but dominant *Romanitas*. Its religions included classic Greco-Roman gods and goddesses, Thracian deities, and Oriental cults (Isis). The dominant new

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<sup>\*</sup> Boldface type indicates key points.

factor was Imperial religion and the Emperor cult, the faith of some fifty million people, more or less, with rituals and celebrations that touched most of life. Acts 16 and archeology report no synagogue (at best, a “place of prayer” for a few women like Lydia, a convert). On women in these cults, see Marchal 73–90. Phil may echo but never overtly quotes (OT) Scripture ([4] COMMENT A.1). Jews were negligible or nonexistent (Bockmuehl 9) in Roman Philippi. See further *Philippian Studies*.

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## II. PAUL AND PHILIPPI IN ACTS: THE FOUNDING MISSION AND SUBSEQUENT VISITS (ACTS 16:11–40; 20:1–6)

Philippians has long been treated in light of the Apostle's visits to the city as reported in Acts. Luke may have good source materials for chs. 16 and 20, perhaps even "information concerning Philippi . . . from an eyewitness of the Pauline mission" (Haenchen, *Acts* 503, cf. 86–87; Lüdemann 1989b:181–84, 222–25), behind his eight units:<sup>1</sup> (1) Travel Itinerary, from Troas to Philippi (Acts 16:11–12a); (2) The First Converts, Lydia, with her household (16:12b–15). A "house church" results when Lydia "was baptized and her household" (*oikos*, children, slaves, extended family), the first of several in Philippi.<sup>2</sup> (3) Exorcism of a Python-spirited slave girl (16:16–18); (4) The Sequel to the Exorcism: Paul and Silas beaten and jailed by the Philippian authorities (16:19–24); (5) The Further Sequel: an earthquake frees the prisoners, the jailer and his household are converted (16:25–34); (6) The Next Day: Paul and Silas get public apologies, but are asked to leave Philippi (16:35–40). Paul invokes his Roman citizenship in 16:37; that he possessed citizenship has sometimes been denied, but it is likely historical.<sup>3</sup> (7) A Second Possible Visit by Paul to Philippi (20:1–2); (8) Paul's Final Visit to Philippi (20:3–6).

**SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ACTS**, including Commentaries (cited by author's name; plus, if necessary, *Acts* or (Ger.) *ApG.*; year or series added, if necessary)

*BC* = *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I. The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson/ K. Lake, 5 vols. London: Macmillan, 1920–33; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979.

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<sup>1</sup> For this commentary a full treatment of the Acts vv was prepared because J. Munck (AB 31, 1967) was so brief. The Fitzmyer AB vol. on Acts (1998) is more detailed, but more can be said than its limited space permitted. It is hoped that my treatment, with excursuses, will appear elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> For "the church [or assembly] in the house of so-and-so" (*hē kat' oikon + gen. ekklēsia*), cf. 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5 (AB 33:736); Phlm 2 (AB 34C:89–90); Banks 1980/1994; Klauck 1981; Matson 136–68; *EDNT* 2:501–2. Was Lydia patron, leader (in hospitality, worship?), and even *episkopos* (Phil 1:1) of such a group? *RoR* 2:10–13 (INTRO. I Bibl.) sketches examples of house churches. A second house church emerged for Philippi at 16:32–24, the jailer and his *oikos*. R. W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004). Cf. (1) COMMENT B.5, Bibl. overseer.

<sup>3</sup> Tarsian citizenship (Acts 21:39) could also be involved (BC 4:201; 5:309–12). Jews could hold Roman citizenship and often did (S. Appelbaum, "The Legal Status of Jewish Communities in the Diaspora," in *CRINT* 1:420–63). Saul may have had it by birth (22:28; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* [London: Nelson, 1969; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971] 235). A citizen might carry a small wooden diptych copy of birth registration, cf. F. Schulz, "Roman Registers of Birth and Birth Certificates (i)," *JRS* 33 (1942) 78–91 and (ii) 33 (1943) 55–64; Sherwin-White 1963:148–46; Tajra 28, 81–89. See further, (3) COMMENT B.3.j, n 39; (4) COMMENT A.7; (16) COMMENT B.1.a.

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### III. THE LETTER(S) “TO THE PHILIPPIANS” (PROS PHILIPPĒSIOUS)

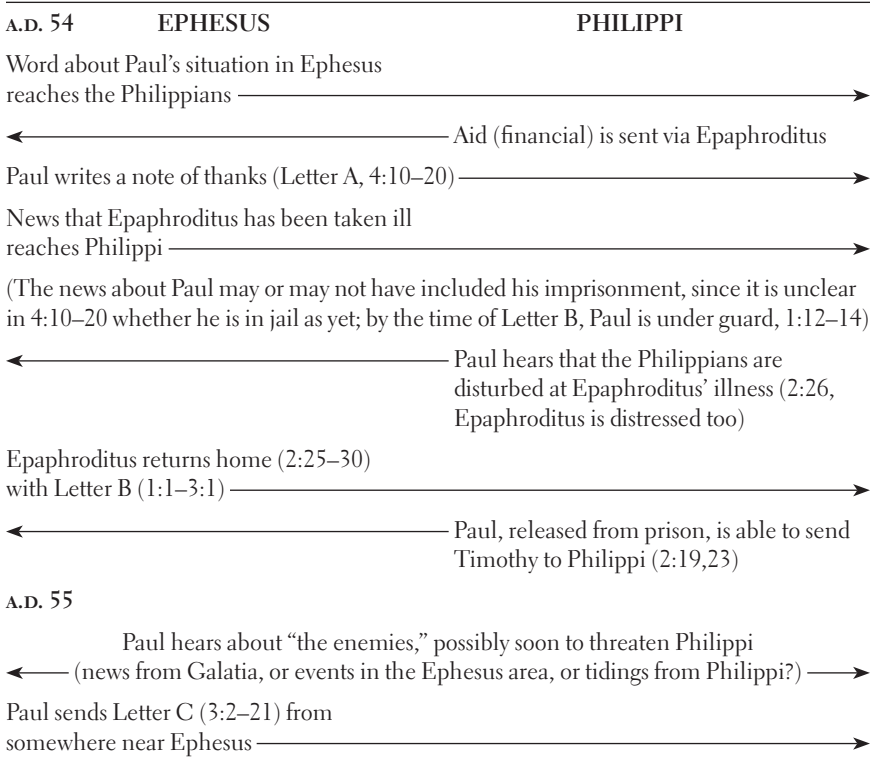
A. *Outline*. In light of content (logical or thematic development; Lft.), epistolary approaches (J. L. White, Doty), and rhetoric (Garland 1985), the following outline fits the four chs. as a whole:

- 1:1–2        Opening salutation or address (sender, addressees, greeting).
- 1:3–11      Thanksgiving and prayer (report on how Paul prays) for the community.
- 1:12–26     Paul’s situation in imprisonment: prospects for the gospel and for himself.
- 1:27–2:18   Exhortation to the Philippian community in its situation: unity, fearlessness, harmony, traditionally “humility” has been emphasized, love for others, and witness in the world.  
2:6–11     the “Christ hymn” or “story of salvation,” among other gospel incentives (2:1,5).
- 2:19–30     News and plans about Timothy, Paul, and Epaphroditus.
- 3:1         Rejoice!
- 3:2–21      Warnings against “dogs” and “enemies of Christ’s cross,” with references to the righteousness of God, Christ’s death and resurrection, Paul as pattern, future eschatology.
- 4:1         Stand firm!
- 4:2–9       Admonitions to individuals (vv 2–3) and the community at Philippi (vv 4–7, 8–9).
- 4:10–20     Thanks, sort of, for gifts from Philippi to Paul.
- 4:21–23     Conclusion: greetings (vv 21–22), benediction (v 23).

B. *Purposes*, in part noted above (p. 3), are detailed in (1) COMMENT B.2. The eight purposes suggest several letters; the several problems addressed point to how the document(s) arose.

C. *Communications Between Paul and Philippi*. The number of trips between Macedonia and the city of Paul's imprisonment is a factor in reconstructing the situation behind Phil, for determining its place of composition (VII.A, below), and hence an overall chronology (VIII). The chart below sketches likely contacts between Paul and the Philippians.

CHART 1: Communications between Paul and Philippi, including his three letters.



Paul expects the following contacts *in the future*: (1) Timothy will go to Philippi (2:19a) as soon as Paul sees how his own situation will turn out (2:23). (2) He looks for Timothy to come back and report firsthand on matters in Philippi, thus cheering Paul with news about the Philippians (2:19b). (3) Paul expects "deliverance" (1:19); then he will come to Philippi again, indeed "shortly" (1:16; 2:24), details that fit Ephesus better than Caesarea or Rome.

#### IV. TEXT, GLOSSES, AND INTERPOLATION THEORIES

A. *Text*. Our tr. and commentary are based on the 27th ed. of Nestle-Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993; hereafter NA<sup>27</sup>), with occasional references to its earlier editions, the UBSGNT, and

WH = B. F. Westcott/F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge/London 1881). The judgment of Vincent (xxxvii) in 1897, “The epistle presents no textual questions of importance,” found assent by Bockmuehl 40 a century later. Textual matters are regularly taken up in the NOTES, often, because of constraints of space, by referring to NA<sup>27</sup>, though one would like to spell out for the general reader MS names, dates, etc. The critical principle of preferring the shorter reading is reconsidered in (13) NOTE on 3:12b, or . . . *justified*.

B. *Glosses and Interpolations*. Most such (19th-cent.) notions of later additions (cf. Moffatt, *Intro*. 172) have long since been forgotten. Recent commentators agree there are no interpolated passages in Phil. But note W. Schmithals; J. C. O’Neill 1988 (Section 7 Bibl.); NOTES on 1:1 *episkopoi kai diakonois*; 1:17 *ouch hagnōs*; (3) COMMENT B.2 n 22.

### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON TEXT, GLOSSES, AND INTERPOLATIONS

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## V. AUTHORSHIP

Phil says it is by Paul and Timothy (1:1). On co-senders, see (1) COMMENT B.4.c. Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians (A.D. 115–135) expressly states Paul wrote to Philippi and contains echoes of his letter(s). Though 19th-cent. criticism (Tübingen School) sometimes denied Paul wrote Phil (Moffatt, *Intro*. 165, 170–72; 165), today, “authenticity of Philippians is not seriously challenged” (L. T. Johnson 1999:369), even from computer research in the 1960s.

## VI. PARTITION THEORIES AND THE UNITY (INTEGRITY) OF THE DOCUMENT

“Unity” implies Paul composed all four chs. of Phil as one letter and sent it on a single occasion. Some speak of “integrity,” a somewhat loaded term, as if composite letters lack integrity.

A. *External Evidence in Antiquity*. Polycarp, Phil 3.2, recorded that Paul, “when he was absent, wrote to you letters” (*epistolas*; “them,” pl.; cf. 11.3, *epistulae*);

some seek to explain away the pl. (Hartog 224–25; Berding 62–63). It has been argued that the “Epistle to the Laodiceans” (ABD 4:231–33; HSNTA $\rho$ oc 2:128–32) used a version of Phil that lacked 3:2–4:3 and 4:10–20 (Sellew; contrast Holloway 1998). There is thus some ancient outside support for partitioning (Bockmuehl 22, “corroborating evidence”). The view rests mainly on what is in Phil.

#### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON POLYCARP AND LAODICEANS

- Berding, K. 2002. *Polycarp and Paul: An Analysis of their Literary and Theological Relationship in Light of Polycarp's Use of Biblical and Extra-Biblical Literature*. VCSup 62. Leiden: Brill.
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- Sellew, P. 1994. “*Laodiceans* and the Philippians Fragments Hypothesis,” *HTR* 87:17–28; cf. 91 (1998) 327–29.

B. *Internal Evidence in Philippians*. The case for one or more letters in Phil is cumulative.

1. 3:1–2 represents an abrupt shift in mood and content, followed by polemical invective in 3:2–21. Ch. 3 was starting point for theories of a letter within canonical Phil. Cf. below, (10), (11).

2. 4:10–20, where Paul seems finally to thank the Philippians for their support but never quite says “thank you,” is buried late in the four-ch. letter. It could be the body of a note written to the Philippians promptly upon receipt of their gift. Cf. (16) COMMENT A.1.

Partition theories go back to 19th -cent. German scholarship (not to Le Moyne in 1685; so D. Cook). In 1914 Symes argued for *five* letters by Paul to Philippi! In general, a case for *two* letters was common by 1940 (3:1–2 as dividing line; e.g., Gnilka). After 1945 *three* letters became more common (e.g., Rahtjen, Schmithals, Beare). Space does not permit listing arguments here or supporters for each view or for the unity of Phil. By 1978 a considerable consensus could be claimed, at least in German scholarship, for partitioning.<sup>1</sup> But some, esp. in the Anglo-Saxon world, never were convinced and defended the unity of Phil. In particular there has been appeal to *rhetorical* analysis<sup>2</sup> to support a four-ch. letter. Rhetorical anal-

<sup>1</sup> Schenke-Fischer 1:125, 132 n 2.

<sup>2</sup> **Rhetorical approaches:** On application of classical rhetoric to the NT, see G. A. Kennedy 1984; B. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); F. W. Hughes 13–50; on the “New Rhetoric,” Marchal 3–11. Terms in Lausberg; *WDNTECLR* 357–59. Swift combined some rhetorical aspects with epistolary terms. Garland 1985 regarded 1:27–4:3 as a literary unity, with the appeal to Euodia and Syntyche in 4:3 “climactic” (173); 3:1–21 is a digression, but deliberate rhetorically, “to affect his audience prior to the direct, emotional appeal in 4:2.” Robuck ([7] Bibl.) 156–74, *salutatio* (1:1–2), *captatio benevolentiae* (1:3–11), *narratio* (1:12–3:21), *petitio* (4:1–20), and *conclusio* (4:21–23), with 2:5–11 as *exemplum* (194). Watson 1988b, deliberative rhetoric (not epideictic, as

ysis can also be enlisted in support of more than one letter to Philippi (Pesch). The rhetorical approach is important enough to summarize examples in n 2, to which reference will be made throughout the commentary. Much the same is true of appeal to *chiastic* or concentric structure as a key (Wick),<sup>3</sup> and to the principle of

Kennedy 1984:77 held, but cf. Watson 60, Phil 2:19–30 is epideictic): *exordium* (1:3–26); *narratio* (1:27–30); *probatio* (2:1–3:21), with three developments of the proposition, in 2:1–11, 2:12–18, and 3:1–21 (2:19–30 is *digressio*); *peroratio*, 4:1–20. So Geoffrion 21, 160–61; Fields (see below [12] COMMENT A.1); Sisson 246–48. Critique of Watson in Reed 1993 (JSNTSup 90) 314–23. Watson 1997 integrated epistolary and rhetorical structure, followed by D. K. Williams 2002:89–90. Schoon-Janßen 141, the rhetorical outline Watson employed for all four chs. was used by Schenk as rhetorical structure for his Letter C (*exordium*, 3:2–4; *narratio*, 3:5–7; *propositio*, 3:8–11; *argumentatio*, 3:12–14; and *refutatio*, 3:15–21; cf. Reumann 1991a). Wick 163 concludes that the rhetorical method produced no clarity on the unity question. Bloomquist 119–38, Paul’s letter is deliberative but with forensic and epideictic elements (120); 1:3–11 = *exordium*; 1:12–14 *narratio*; 1:15–18a *partitio*; 1:18b–4:7 = *argumentatio*, with 1:18b–26 *confirmatio*, 1:27–2:18 *exhortatio* concluding the *confirmatio*, 2:19–30 *exempla*; 3:1–16 *reprehensio*; 3:17–4:7 *exhortatio*, concluding the *reprehensio*; and 4:8–20, *peroratio*. 1:1–2:30 presents “all of the component parts of a non-literary papyrus letter” (116), with 3:1–4:7 mirroring 1:15–2:18 (111) and 4:8–20 providing a third section of epistolary “body”; thus there could be three letter bodies (though Bloomquist opts finally for an integral letter, 117). Black 1995:48, 1:1–2 = epistolary prescript; 1:3–11 *exordium*; 1:12–26, *narratio*; 1:27–3:21, *argumentatio*, involving a *propositio* in 1:27–30, *probatio* in 2:1–30, and *refutatio* in 3:1–21; the *peroratio* consists only of 4:1–9, for 4:10–20 is again *narratio*; 4:21–23, epistolary postscript. Primarily deliberative rhetoric (16; but cf. 46 on “judicial” rhetoric; “friendship” is minimized for any macrostructure, n 46); epistolary categories (22–44) like “body opening”; “Philippians is best understood as a hybrid letter in which the epistolary body contains a deliberative heart,”<sup>49</sup> J. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (New York: Oxford, 2000), epideictic discourse had more importance in antiquity than is often assumed, compared with civic, “pragmatic” oratory. D. K. Williams 2002:78–105 stresses “rhetorical arguments using theological language” (82). C. W. Davis 1999 injects “principles of orality” into the question of literary structure in Phil (see n 3 below). Brucker ([7] Bibl.): 1:3–11 *exordium*, 1:12–26 *narratio*, 1:27–30 *propositio*, 2:1–3:21 *probatio*, 4:1–20 *peroratio*. Edart 290–300, 1:3–11 *exordium*, 1:12–26 *narratio*, 1:27–30 *propositio*, 2:1–18 first *probatio* (12–19 = *peroratio*), 2:19–30 + 3:1a + ch. 4 *digressio* (4:1–9 = *recapitulatio*, 4:10–23 *peroratio*, with two *propositiones*); all this is Text A; 3:2–16 is a separate letter; see n 7 below. For Bittasi, see n 3. R. D. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, CBET 18 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996; rev., Leuven: Peeters, 2000) and others conclude that Paul knew little about, and did not conform to, ancient rhetorical theories. Bockmuehl 39, this “frenzy of scholarly activity” is a dangerous “pan-rhetoricism.”

<sup>3</sup> **Chiastic structures:** Rolland 1990 found a relatively simple structure: 1:1–11 goes with 4:10–23, 1:12–2:18 has parallels with 3:1–4:20; 2:19–30 is “interlude.” P. Aspen, 1992 diss. (cf. Pretorius 1995: 273–75, 277–84), proposed a chiastic, or better concentric, reading where 2:6–11 is the center of a letter that excludes 3:2–4:1 and 4:10–20. His “main letter” runs: Phil 1:1–2 = Greetings; 4:21–23 = Final salutation

1:3–11 A<sup>1</sup> Gospel-*koinōnia*, the central concern of the letter

1:12–26 B<sup>1</sup> Paul’s trials

1:27–2:5 C<sup>1</sup> Exhortation to “one mind, one spirit”

2:6–11 Center Hymn

2:12–18 C<sup>2</sup> Exhortation to obedience

2:19–3:1 B<sup>2</sup> Epaphroditus’ trials

4:2–9 A<sup>2</sup> Summons to *koinōnia* for Euodia and Syntyche, the specific concern of this letter.

P. Wick 1994, without noting Aspen’s proposal, laid out blocks of parallel material (depending chiefly on vocabulary links), with the hymn as center, but for all four chs.:

Prescript, 1:1–2 Prooimium, 1:3–11 Postscript, 4:21–23

Einheit A (theme: friends and enemies, in a self-report; salvation; “death,” “flesh,” 243 and 250 words)

a<sup>1</sup> = 1:12–26

(see box on p. 43; Greek printout 205)

a<sup>2</sup> = 3:1–16

an *inclusio*, two references serving as brackets for a passage or document (e.g., “grace” at 1:2 and 4:23; “peace” 1:2, 4:7, cf. 4:9). Such analyses vary and often contradict each other. L. Alexander sees a Hellenistic “family letter” — 1:1–2, 1:3–11, 1:12–26 (reassurance about the sender); 1:27–2:18 (request for reassurance

Einheit B (theme: walk/conduct, opponents; admonition, warning; *politeuesthai*, *politeuma*, 82/90 words)

b<sup>1</sup> = 1:27–30 (box on p. 45; Greek, 206) b<sup>2</sup> = 3:17–21

Einheit C (theme: the same mind, joy; *parakalein* words; (be)love(d); 5 items in 2:1 and 4:1; 58/53 words)

c<sup>1</sup> = 2:1–4 (+ 5–11) (box on p. 47; Greek, 207) c<sup>2</sup> = 4:1–3  
2:5–11, the hymn relates to all units (Einheiten)

Einheit D (theme: awe and joy at salvation; rejoice 2x, always; series of terms in 4:6, 8; 115/101 words)

d<sup>1</sup> = 2:12–18 (box on p. 51; Greek, 208) d<sup>2</sup> = 4:4–9

Einheit E (theme: [epistolary] correspondence; joy, need, send, lack, Epaphroditus; 173/169 words)

e<sup>1</sup> = 2:19–30 (box on p. 53; Greek, 209) e<sup>2</sup> = 4:10–20.

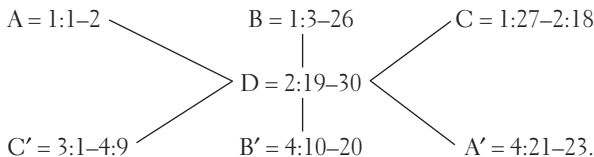
Wicks’ proposal has received some support (e.g., Pretorius 1998), but critique in Reed, DA 292–93, 361–64, cf. 292–93 and 255 n 372.

Different again is Luter/Lee 1995:92; their center is 2:17–3:1b, not 2:6–11:

1:1–2 *Opening Greetings*, previewing “partnership” theme, emphasizing servant-leadership.

- A. 1:3–11 *Prologue*, “Partnership in the Gospel” theme, introduced with prayerful gratitude.
- B. 1:12–26 *Comfort/Example*: Paul’s Safety and Right Thinking in the Midst of a Difficult ‘Guarded’ Situation.
- C. 1:27–2:4 *Challenge*: Stand Fast and Be United, Fulfilling Paul’s Joy!
  - D. 2:5–16 *Example/Action*: Christ’s Example of Humility and Suffering before Glory, then Related Behavioral Instructions.
  - E. 2:17–3:1a *Midpoint*: Caring Models of Gospel Partnership, Two of Which Are Sent to Help Immediately.
  - D’. 3:1b–21 *Example/Action*: Paul’s Example of Humbling and Suffering before “Upward Call”/Transformation, then Instructions.
- C’. 4:1–5 *Challenge*: Stand Fast and Accentuate Existing Joy by the Reconciliation of Two Past Gospel Partners!
- B’. 4:6–9 *Comfort/Example*: The Philippians’ ‘Guarded’ Peace of Mind and Right Thinking in the Midst of an Anxious Situation.
- A’. 4:10–20 *Epilogue*: Partnership from the Past Renewed, with Expressed Gratitude.

4:21–23 *Closing Greetings*: Reviewing Partnership Theme, Emphasizing Oneness of the Saints. Severe critique by Porter and Reed 1998, and on Wick’s use of Qoh 1:3–3:15, 2 Sam 9–20, and 1 Kgs 1–2 to provide evidence for parallelisms in a Pauline letter. WDNTCECLR 358, either Wick or Luter/Lee or both “manipulated the data.” C. W. Davis is similar to Luter/Lee (Phil 2:19–30 as “center,” D. F. Watson’s “digression”) but differs on the number and scope of concentric units:



Bittasi 210–11, cf. 206: two halves around 2:19–30: 1:1–2 *praescript*, 1:3–11 *exordium*, with 1:9–11 as *propositio* → 1:12–26 → *exhortatio* 1:27–30 → 2:1–18 the example of Christ Jesus; the center of the letter = 2:19–30 Timothy and Epaphroditus; 3:1 hesitation and reception formula → 3:2–16 the example of Paul → 3:17–4:1 exhortation → 4:2–9 particular exhortations → 4:10–20 final thanks → 4:21–23 *postscriptum*. J. W. Welch ([12] Bibl.) 226 concluded Phil “contains no overall chiasmic structure”; the small chiasmic patterns are “relatively insignificant and unremarkable.” For a possible chiasmic structure in Letter B, see (5) COMMENT A.1.

about the recipients); 2:19–30; 4:10–20, thanks; 4:21–22 (greetings), 4:23; 3:1–4:9 breaks the pattern to deliver a “sermon at a distance.” Holloway 2001:7–34 takes Phil as a unity in his effort to show that the entire document is a “letter of consolation.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, West, in stressing “dying for friends” as part of the *philia topos*.<sup>5</sup> Arguments have also claimed Phil as a “letter of friendship”; e.g., Fee 23, cf. 3–4, is dubious for the letter in its entirety, but elements from this topos work well in Letter A (4:10–20; see [16] COMMENT A.2). Witherington, in spite of his title *Friendship . . . in Philippi*, does not go the route of *philia*, but instead invokes a presumed *rhetorical* structure (27–28, cf. 11–20). Epistolary and rhetorical analyses were applied by R. Pesch 1985 in a three-letter hypothesis.<sup>6</sup> Edart prefers a rhetorical over an epistolary model, with 3:2–16 as a separate letter.<sup>7</sup>

Arguments exist, along various lines, for Phil as a unitary letter or a combination of two or three letters. Note esp. Schenk’s text-linguistic, as well as traditional and rhetorical, arguments for three letters. We are impressed with a broad trend toward three letters, but this carries the obligation to provide a “double exegesis,” the sense in Letter A (or B or C) and in the redacted document we possess. Hence the working hypothesis outlined on p. 3, above, for three letters by Paul to Philippi.

<sup>4</sup> Holloway 2001 “seeks to understand” Phil “as an ancient letter of consolation” (p. 1). “Consolation” = not just as “sympathy” but considerable admonition (“tough love”). Philosophical theories in Cic., *Tusc.* 3.31.76. It was common to distinguish “what really matters” from *adiaphora* and to emphasize joy (“you must . . . learn how to rejoice,” Seneca, *Ep.* 23.3). Overall, Holloway’s attempt at genre does not convince, but instances of consolation in some passages (not always in Holloway) will be examined in context.

<sup>5</sup> Dying for friends was a frequent, though varied, theme in the ancient world (West 32–130; cf. Rom 5:8, 1 Thess 5:10, and 1 Cor 15:3). But the “hymn to Christ” in 2:6–11 (133–54) lacks any *hyper* phrase (“for us”), and so West is reduced to arguing that “[r]eaders in a Greco-Roman city” could have understood the hymn thus, “based on their cultural context” (135–36; 152 n 66). The attempt to find “eschatological proof” in 2:9–11 of “vindication that will be shared at the Day of the Lord by those who suffer for the sake of the gospel” (153) faces the difficulties that these vv lack any *parousia* reference and speak of all “in heaven, on earth, and under the earth,” not suffering Christians.

<sup>6</sup> Letter A, prescript and possible *exordium* are missing; the body (4:10–20) is a *narratio*. For Letter B see Doty 43, Schenk 68–249, as well as Pesch: prescript (1:1–2), *exordium* (1:3–11), *narratio* (1:12–26, about Paul), with thesis for the congregation (1:27–30), proofs (*probatio*) and *paraenesis* woven in (2:1–18). Then travel plans (2:19–30), followed by concluding admonitions (3:1, possibly 4:4–7) and doubtless greetings and benediction in a postscript (not extant). Letter C: prescript and *exordium* not preserved, the body (3:1b or 2–21) is a warning, with *narratio* about Paul (3:4–14), which provides proofs (*probatio*, 3:8b–11, eschatologically oriented), admonitions, and *peroratio* (3:20), possibly including 4:1–3 and 8–9. Any greetings and benediction are lost. For Letter C, see also Reumann 1991a ([11] *Bibl.*) 137: 3:2–3 = *exordium*, sharp antithesis between “true circumcision” and “mutilation,” with warning against the (negative example) “evil workers” who trust in the flesh. Transition in 3:4 to autobiography (“I”), with 5–6 a *narratio* about Paul’s way of life under the Law (negative example) and then 7–11 as positive example, *narratio* becoming *argumentatio*. *propositio* in vv 9–10, on righteousness and faith and knowing Christ (resurrection and sufferings). Paul’s personal testimony continues through 12–14, as *argumentatio*. Vv 15–21 are direct *refutatio* of those warned against in v 2. Vv 20–21 cite as climax and future promise a “song of confidence in Christ’s power.” 4:1–3 and 8–9 can then be taken as *peroratio*.

<sup>7</sup> Edart 15–41 and 210–75; see above, n 2. Letter B stresses justification, which is not referred to in 1:1–3:1a or 3:17–4:23. 3:11, 12b (perfection) 13b, 14 (the prize) are redactoral (261), from the perspective of a Stoic sage (266–71), with Luke the probable redactor (273–75). Eckey concludes for three letters.

The proof of any theory is how it works out in practice and enables readers to see things in the text. Letters to Philippi from different settings contrasts with the tradition that all the “imprisonment epistles” (Phil, Col, Phlm, Eph) are of a piece, from one place.

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**VII. THEORIES ON PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING FOR THE (THREE) LETTERS AND THEIR REDACTION**

*A. Places and Dates for the Letter(s) by Paul to Philippi.* The traditional answer was Rome (Acts 28 or at a later imprisonment there). As the 19th cent. dawned, *Caesarea* in Palestine was proposed (Acts 23:33–27:2); late in the 19th cent., *Ephesus*, where Paul ministered for two years or more (Acts 19:1–22). *Corinth* has been suggested, esp. since 1973. Generally those who favor Rome also champion the unity of Phil (Beare is an exception: Rome, but three letters). R. P. Martin 1976:56 declared “an impasse” on place.

Patristic views are mixed (cf. Curran 200, “*there was really no ancient tradition on the subject*”) but eventually came down for Rome, a position that continued into the 19th cent. and beyond (e.g., Schinz 1833; H. G. A. Ewald 1857; K. Barth 1927). *Caesarea Maritima* was esp. championed by Lohmyer (1930 KEK; 1956

ed., pp. 3–4; Schmauch, Beiheft 12–13; Reicke 1970). *Ephesus*, first advanced by H. Lisco, then Deissmann, received major support in Feine 1916 and G. S. Duncan. On *Corinth*, see S. Dockx.

For each site, reconstruction of events is necessary. Arguments involve (1) distance and travel time for trips between Philippi and the place of Paul's imprisonment (see III.C, above; Ephesus comes off well); (2) the meaning of Praetorium (see on 1:13, possible for all sites); (3) "those of the Emperor's household" (4:22, people found in all four places); (4) Paul's collection project for the saints at Jerusalem (completed by the time Paul was in Caesarea or Rome; Philippi was likely much involved); (5) the serious nature of Paul's incarceration (Phil 1:20–23, death possible; hardly the freedom "without hindrance" at Rome in Acts 28); (6) identity of the brothers and sisters with Paul (Phil 4:21b; see [17] COMMENT B.3); (7) references to Paul visiting Philippi and travel references in 1 Cor like 4:17. Each site continues to have champions (often less firm than in the past, with perhaps increasing support for Ephesus). An Ephesian provenance explains more for and about Phil than any other theory. Once place is agreed on, dating follows (VIII, below).

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## VIII. CHRONOLOGY ON PAUL AND PHILIPPI (A.D. 48–57)

The three letters from Paul to Philippi and three possible visits he made to the city according to Acts (II, above) may be integrated into an overall chronology, using dates in agreement with a majority of recent interpreters, not the proposed "early chronologies" of J. Knox or Lüdemann.

### CHART 2: Paul and Philippi: An Attempt at Chronology and Critical Coordination

Apostolic Conference (Acts 15), variously dated by scholars to A.D. 43, 46, 47, 48, 49

So-Called Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36–18:22)

Antioch → Syria, Cilicia (Tarsus? 15:41) → Lystra (+ Timothy, 16:1–4). 16:5 = fourth "summary statement" in Acts (cf. 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20; 28:30–31). → Phrygia, Galatia, (16:6) → Mysia and Troas (vision of man of Macedonia, 16:9–10).

- A.D. "We"-section (16:10–17 or 18) → Neapolis, PHILIPPI (16:12)
- 48–49 FOUNDING MISSION AT PHILIPPI (Acts 16:12–40, above, II), several months duration = **Visit 1** by Paul (and team) to Philippi
- 49 Paul goes to Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. The Philippians send aid to Paul in Thessalonica at least twice (Phil 4:16)
- 50 Arrival in *Corinth*, extensive ministry there 50–51 (or 52, Marxsen, *Intro.*, others). Writes 1 THESSALONIANS (and 2 Thess, if genuine). Contacts with Philippi?? — unknown.
- 51 Hearing before Gallio, proconsul from summer 51 till summer 52 (Riesner 206–7, e.g.)  
Paul leaves Corinth, by ship, via Ephesus, and goes to Jerusalem (Acts 18:22). Apostolic Conference (account in Acts 15), if identified with this visit (so J. Knox, Jewett, e.g.)  
Winter of 51/52, at Antioch (Acts 18:22b–23a) (conflict with Peter, Gal 2:11ff.)
- 52 So-called Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23–21:17), goes through Galatia and Phrygia, to Ephesus
- 53–54 Paul settles in *Ephesus*, eventually locating his ministry in the hall of Tyrannus, for two years, perhaps 27 months (19:10). Planning further missionary work, he sends, perhaps at this time, Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 20:22).

1 CORINTHIANS written, before Pentecost, perhaps in 54 (1 Cor 16:9). = Letter A in the sequence to Corinth. A “previous letter” (cf. 1 Cor 5:9) is likely lost (some see it at 2 Cor 6:14–7:1, but others claim that frg. is related to Qumran or is an *anti*-Pauline frg. from Paul’s opponents). Collange and others put Phil A and B before 1 Cor, but does 1 Cor suggest any imprisonment experience? At 1 Cor 16:5, Paul notes that he intends to pass through Macedonia on the way to Corinth.

GALATIANS was written sometime in this period (A.D. 52–54, Jewett 1979:50–55, H. D. Betz, *Gal*; unless it is fitted into the Corinthian sojourn in 56–57 when Paul writes Rom; Wedderburn 2002:108, before 1 Cor).

During this Ephesian period, the congregation in Philippi hears of Paul’s situation (from Timothy and Erastus?) and sends aid, presumably with their congregational *apostolos* and *leitourgos*, Epaphroditus. See Chart 1, in III.C, above, on these and other contacts between Philippi and Paul.

Paul writes **LETTER A TO PHILIPPI** (4:10–20), a note of thanks; he may not as yet be imprisoned; cf. 4:14 *thlipsis*, however.

- 54–55 Paul *imprisoned in Ephesus*—cf. Duncan’s “first crisis”: charged by Jews with temple-robbery (Acts 19:9; 20:19 and 3; 19:37 *hierosulos*; Paul had effects not only on the pagan temple of Artemis but also on the temple-tax for the Jewish cult center in Jerusalem).

Writes **LETTER B TO PHILIPPI** (1:1 or 1:3–2:30 or 3:1, plus perhaps parts of the present 4:1–9 and 21–23)

Sometime during this period Titus was sent to Corinth concerning Paul’s “collection project” for the Jewish-Christian poor in Jerusalem.

- 55 Paul released (cf. Acts 20:21). Riot of the silversmiths (19:23–41, if not earlier or later). Paul in Asia Minor (province of Asia, outside Ephesus). Imprisoned again? (cf. 2 Cor 1:8)—**PHILEMON** written.

Writes **LETTER B TO CORINTH**, an apologia for his ministry, seeking to win the Corinthians over, in the face of unsettled conditions in the church there (= 2 Cor 2:14–6:13, 7:2–4), from the Ephesus area.

**LETTER C TO PHILIPPI** (3:2–21), the polemic. Is the same group as, or one similar to, the opponents in Galatia, or those who are being encountered in Corinth?

(June)—“Painful Visit” to Corinth, a quick trip across the Aegean; Paul humiliated (trip unrecorded in Acts, but cf. 2 Cor 2:4, 9; 7:12; 12:14; 13:1).

**LETTER C TO CORINTH**, the “Letter of Tears” (so called from 2 Cor 2:4, “I wrote you with many tears”; some compare Phil 3:18 “with tears”) = 2 Cor 10–13; from the Ephesus area. 2 Cor 11:8–9 notes how Christians from Macedonia had supplied Paul’s needs when he was in Corinth.

Sometime thereafter, Titus was dispatched to Corinth (so Marxsen, among others, assuming that 2 Cor 12:18 refers to an earlier visit).

A possible Asian imprisonment that led Paul to despair of life itself (2 Cor 1:8–11). Jewett places it at the end of the winter of 55–56, actually in 56.

After release or when circumstances permitted, Paul travels overland to Troas and, not finding Titus there (after his trip to Corinth), goes on to *Macedonia* (Acts 20:1; 2 Cor 2:12), where he meets Titus and learns that reconciliation has been achieved with the Corinthians. Did this take place at *Philippi* or Thessalonica?

= **Visit 2** by Paul to Philippi.

**LETTER D TO CORINTH**, the “Reconciliation Letter,” 2 Cor 1:3–2:13, 7:5–16, from Macedonia (7:5–6). If 2 Cor 8 was a separate letter, it was dispatched soon afterwards to Corinth, and ch. 9 just after that, to Achaia, from Macedonia. Both concern the collection, the latter being more positive on its progress. Some take as part of a single letter, with 1–8 or portions thereof.

56–57, winter—Paul in *Corinth* (Acts 20:2–3)—ROMANS written, copies possibly also to churches in the East.

57 Trip back through Macedonia, including *Philippi* (Acts 20:6) = Paul’s **third and last visit** there, according to Acts. → Troas, Miletus (contact with elders from Ephesus), arrival in Jerusalem in June. Arrest.

57–59 Imprisonment, mostly in *Caesarea*.

59–60, winter—Voyage to Rome, shipwreck in Malta. —————→ Rome in early A.D. 60.

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## IX. METHODS AND APPROACH IN THIS COMMENTARY

Methodology calls for more attention than space here permits.<sup>1</sup> In general, the recognized steps in historical-literary-critical approaches have been followed (cf. L. E. Keck/G. M. Tucker, “Exegesis,” *IDBSup* 296–303, esp. 299–301; Reumann 1969, 1978). Of so-called new methods (cf. Reumann 1992), rhetorical and social-world approaches have proven helpful but not so definitive as some hoped. One can applaud the desire for “historically grounded theological exegesis” (Bockmuehl 43), but within the confines of space and human frailty, an eclectic approach often results, fitting for Phil. See further, *Philippian Studies*.

**SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON METHODS AND APPROACH** (see also General Bibliography)

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## X. THEOLOGY IN PHILIPPIANS

Commentators sometimes produce a treatment of theology in Phil only; e.g., Fee 46–53; U. B. Müller 25–31; Hawthorne 1987; Reumann 1987; I. H. Marshall 1993; Fowl 2005:205–35, theology of friendship. More commonly Phil is treated as part of Pauline or NT theology, often minor in comparison with Gal or Rom. E.g., *TPTA*, Bultmann. See further, *Philippian Studies*.

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<sup>1</sup> For experiences and reflections in writing AB Phil, see my address at the 1997 SBL/AAR Lutheran Professors and Graduate Students breakfast, “Serving Two Masters: Teaching and Writing Between Academy and Church,” *Intersections* (ELCA Division for Higher Education and Schools) 9 (2000) 23–33.

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